

**IN THE ABSTRACT**

Please cancel the original abstract and substitute therefor the replacement abstract that follows:

**ABSTRACT**

A compact scanning apparatus includes an optical system to deliver a beam of pulsed infrared laser light that illuminate an interrogation area of a surface. The illumination has sufficient intensity and duration to cause selective ablation of molecules of a contraband substance present on the surface without substantially damaging the surface. A collection system collects at least a portion of the ablated molecules and transfers them to a chemical analysis system having a detector. In response to the presence of a wide variety of contraband substance molecules, the detector outputs an electrical signal that activates an audible or visible alarm. Automated screening is provided in an accurate, reliable manner that virtually eliminates the vagaries of human performance. False alarms are reduced. Detection efficacy is increased. A traceable residue of the detected contraband is left on the article for subsequent forensic analysis.